

St. Thomas's Day Nursery

Inspection report for early years provision

Unique Reference Number	EY217839
Inspection date	04 February 2008
Inspector	Linda Tomkins
Setting Address	St. Thomas's Road, Tean, Staffordshire, ST10 4DS
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Registered person	Lisa Snow and Lisa Hopkin
Type of inspection	Integrated
Type of care	Full day care

ABOUT THIS INSPECTION

The purpose of this inspection is to assure government, parents and the public of the quality of childcare and, if applicable, of nursery education. The inspection was carried out under Part XA Children Act 1989 as introduced by the Care Standards Act 2000 and, where nursery education is provided, under Schedule 26 of the School Standards and Framework Act 1998.

This report details the main strengths and any areas for improvement identified during the inspection. The judgements included in the report are made in relation to the outcomes for children set out in the Children Act 2004; the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding; and, where nursery education is provided, the *Curriculum guidance for the foundation stage*.

The report includes information on any complaints about the childcare provision which Ofsted has received since the last inspection or registration or 1 April 2004 whichever is the later.

The key inspection judgements and what they mean

Outstanding: this aspect of the provision is of exceptionally high quality

Good: this aspect of the provision is strong

Satisfactory: this aspect of the provision is sound

Inadequate: this aspect of the provision is not good enough

For more information about early years inspections, please see the booklet *Are you ready for your inspection?* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT SORT OF SETTING IS IT?

St. Thomas's Day Nursery opened in 2002 and operates from three rooms in a detached, single storey building next to St. Thomas's church in Tean, Staffordshire. A maximum of 49 children may attend the nursery at any one time. The nursery is open each weekday from 07.30 to 17.30 for 51 weeks of the year. All children share access to a secure enclosed outdoor play area.

There are currently 50 children aged from eight months to four years on roll. Of these, 23 children receive funding for early education. Children come from the local and surrounding areas. The nursery currently supports children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and also supports children who speak English as an additional language.

The nursery employs 11 members of staff. Of these, nine hold appropriate early years qualifications and one is working towards a qualification.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PROVISION

Helping children to be healthy

The provision is satisfactory.

Children benefit from a healthy diet; they have a variety of balanced meals prepared by the cook in the nursery kitchen. For example, salmon, mashed potatoes and vegetables followed by a pudding and custard. Fresh drinking water is available to toddlers and pre-school children throughout the day; jugs and cups are at low level to enable children to help themselves.

However, cups are not visible to children in the baby room which means they cannot indicate when they are thirsty. Children enjoy snacks of fresh fruit together with a choice of water or milk to drink. Staff ensure children under 12 months follow their individual feeding routines as discussed with parents. All dietary and health requirements are recorded on children's individual record forms. This helps to ensure children remain healthy.

Children are learning the importance of personal hygiene through planned routines and procedures. For example, older children know that they have to wash their hands before food and after using the toilet. Staff constantly remind children of routines saying 'don't forget to flush and wash your hands'. Staff follow effective procedures such as routinely cleaning the tables with anti-bacterial spray before food and practising the clear procedures for managing sick and infectious children to prevent the spread of infection. All medication doses are clearly recorded and signed by parents. Accidents and incidents are recorded on individual sheets and signed by parents.

Children rest and sleep according to their needs. Infants sleep in full-size cots whilst toddlers have mattresses on the floor. Linen is changed and washed in the nursery laundry. The bathrooms and nappy change areas are well maintained and supplied with soap and individual labelled towels and flannels.

Mobile children have regular opportunities for outside play and physical exercise at least once a day. The children use climbing and activity equipment in the outside area. They use wheeled toys, slides and balancing equipment which ensures the development of their physical skills. However children in the baby room are not regularly provided with outside experiences and fresh air.

Protecting children from harm or neglect and helping them stay safe

The provision is satisfactory.

Children use a range of generally safe, developmentally-appropriate resources in the indoor areas. These are presented by staff to enable children to choose from the varied range stored at low level. However, some of the dressing-up clothes, dolls and train track are not maintained in a safe and hygienic manner. Staff consistently explain safe practices to the children such as walking to the bathroom and ensuring babies and toddlers are securely strapped into chairs. Children learn about road safety as they practise crossing the 'zebra-crossing' on the floor in the toddler room.

The outside play area is accessed from the main entrance door and provides children with an exciting, safe space to run, use wheeled toys and climb. Premises checks are undertaken regularly to maintain the safety and security of the nursery. The entrance door is locked and monitored by staff. Children are collected by identified nominated people and there are clear policies and procedures for lost or uncollected children.

Staff ensure they maintain a record of visitors' attendance. Children are cared for in an organised environment where risks are limited through effective procedures and risk assessments. Fire fighting equipment is well maintained and checked. Children practise fire drills and emergency evacuation regularly which means they will be safe in an emergency situation. Parents provide written permissions for children to be taken outside the nursery on occasional walks.

Children are well protected by staff who have a sound understanding of child protection issues and follow the correct procedures to record existing injuries and report concerns to the Local Safeguarding Children Board.

Helping children achieve well and enjoy what they do

The provision is good.

Children in the baby room are settled and relaxed in the nursery's welcoming, caring environment. They have positive relationships with staff and each other. Children are developing a sense of humour as they sing, dance and clap hands to music. Staff encourage them to develop their communication skills as they play with each child individually and say rhymes such as 'Round and round the garden'.

Children play happily together using resources such as sensory toys, books, musical toys, play figures and art materials suitable to their age and stage of development. All children enjoy exploration with glue, paint, water, natural materials and sand which helps them represent their feelings and ideas in a variety of ways. Staff are actively involved with the children, for example, they sit on the floor and join in the children's play. Infants are frequently cuddled and stimulated with eye contact and gentle encouragement to explore. Babies show great pleasure when looking at their reflections in the mirrored wall.

Toddlers and staff sing together at various periods during the daily routine. They enthusiastically use gestures and movement to illustrate the words. Children smile and laugh as they congratulate each other's singing with applause. Consequently, children are developing their communication skills very well and are able to express their needs.

The nursery makes effective use of the 'Birth to three matters' framework to plan and provide a range of stimulating and appropriate activities for children under three years. The children's development of language is particularly well promoted by staff through constant conversation, questions and individual attention. Staff sit with children to talk about their toys and books and prompt them to listen and interact to stories.

The daily timetables are flexible and allow regular periods of time outside in the play areas for children in the toddler and pre-school room. They play and climb on specialised large equipment such as a slide, activity climbing frames, wheeled toys and rockers. In addition children enjoy occasional walks in the surrounding village areas.

Early Education

Staff generally use effective methods to maintain the children's interest by asking understandable questions such as 'what did you do at home?' and explaining the purpose of adult-led activities. Plans are flexible and allow staff to spend the majority of their time working directly with the children and ensuring each child is individually welcomed and settled to a chosen activity. When the children are grouped together at registration time all children are

effectively challenged to extend their intellectual development as staff allow time for children to think and respond. However, at times not all staff engage and interact with the children.

The quality of teaching and learning is good. The staff team have extended their knowledge and understanding of the Foundation Stage and plan and provide a varied range of activities under each area of learning. The learning intention is recorded and relates to the stepping stones and early learning goals so that all aspects are covered. Staff have developed their practice of recording observations on the children's progress. The development files and homework books are used to clearly show children's attitude to learning and provide a complete picture of achievements, progress over time and next steps for learning. This enables staff to make accurate progress reports to parents.

The evaluation of activities and teaching methods are well developed to show the impact of planned activities and daily routines on the children and used to inform future planning. Children have activities to continue at home relating to individual areas of learning such as identifying shapes and improving listening skills. Parents are encouraged to discuss children's home progress with the key workers.

Children are clear about the purpose of planned activities because staff explain and show children how to use resources. Children frequently join in with their own ideas and home experiences. Development is good in all six areas of learning and particularly in the areas of personal, social and emotional development and communication, language and literacy because staff frequently engage the children in one-to-one conversations and encourage children to express themselves in a variety of ways.

Behaviour is very well managed by consistent methods. For example, children are encouraged to understand the behaviour boundaries and respond to staff with 'please' and 'thank you' and praise each other's achievements. This results in a secure, well-ordered, caring environment for children.

Children are happy and confident to try new activities and speak in a familiar group. They show a sense of belonging and are motivated to learn. Children behave well and respond positively to help lay tables and pour drinks. However, staff do not extend opportunities for children to further develop by serving their own food. Children remember to say 'please' and 'thank you' and put up their hands to take turns to speak when in a large group. They are developing their personal independence by managing their own clothes and personal hygiene in the bathroom.

Children trace over letters and make recognisable letter marks on paper. They confidently identify labels of their own and other children's names and resources. Children have well-developed skills to speak clearly and express their opinions. For example, when discussing home activities in a large group children said 'I go swimming with a pink ring'. They select books for pleasure during free play and tell each other stories and discuss their favourite books. Children and staff interact together as they read 'Bob the builder' stories.

Children discover the natural world as they watch their cress growing and play in the Autumn leaves in the outside area. They use the computer to interact with games and programmes and experience 'real' telephones and keyboards in their free play. Children learn about other cultures and customs such as Chinese New Year by making paper lanterns. They listen to stories and look at posters and books representing other cultures and children from around the world. They widen their understanding of the wider world and community as they have visits from the police, fire service and a dentist.

Children are developing a sound understanding and using numbers in daily routines, such as counting the number of children at registration time and calculating 'how many more' spoons and cups they need when laying the table for lunch. Children experience weighing and measuring as they mix the ingredients for making cakes. They demonstrate that they have a good understanding of shape and size as they identify shapes such as rhombus and cylinder on flash cards. Children relate to addition and subtraction as they sing number songs and use their fingers to count.

Children develop their knowledge of health and body awareness as they make their own fruit drinks and make collages linked to activities of growing, preparing and eating fruit and vegetables. Children use small tools such as scissors, rollers, paint brushes, knives and spatulas with increasing control. They occasionally go out for walks and use large physical equipment in the outside area to travel around, under, over and through balancing and climbing equipment to develop their physical skills. Children have dance and movement sessions from a visiting dance teacher.

Children express themselves through creative activities and role play. Children put the dolls to bed and say 'she's poorly' then bandage the dolls and staff. During free play children are absorbed whilst constructing tall shapes and models. They said 'it's very, very big, it's for the giraffe. Children clap rhythmically whilst singing 'Goosey, goosey, gander', then discuss their right and left legs. Children identify shades and colours as they compare different kinds of fruit. They appreciate making their own music as they accompany themselves on instruments such as tambourines, drums and recorders.

Helping children make a positive contribution

The provision is satisfactory.

Children behave well, take turns and share. Staff encourage the children to help tidy the toys away and teach the children how to return toys to the correct container. Children are enthusiastic and take a pride in helping; staff reward them with clapping and selecting a 'special' helper. Children are praised by staff who frequently say 'thank you for sitting quietly' and give them stickers or a star on the star chart. Unacceptable behaviour is managed with distraction and clear explanation.

Children enjoy close relationships with the staff and each other. Their confidence and self-esteem are developed by staff who greet children with a warm welcome and consistent encouragement during their play throughout the day. Children are valued and respected as individuals because staff ensure they are aware of their likes and dislikes. Resources positively represent the children who attend, as well as individuals from the wider community, for example, books called 'My first book'. Children celebrate their own and other nations' festivals and customs such as Christmas and Remembrance day. Children made poppies and collages with examples of Chinese writing.

The nursery has various visitors from the surrounding community to increase their knowledge of the wider world and to raise awareness of diversity in their community and develop a positive attitude to others. Children are aware of various feelings and are developing a sense of humour. The older children and staff make each other laugh as they altered the words of 'Humpty dumpty' to include references to bananas and pyjamas. Infants are gently rocked by staff and cuddled whilst having a bottle. Children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is fostered.

The nursery has good access and operates on ground floor level. Currently, there are children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities attending and senior staff have formulated a system to provide appropriate support and ensure the policies and procedures promote inclusion for all children. Staff work closely with fellow professionals and carers.

All children benefit from the positive partnership staff have developed with parents and carers. The individual routines and preferences are discussed and recorded which means that staff are aware of all the children's care needs. Parents of children under two years are provided with a written daily diary detailing food, physical care and achievements throughout the day. There is a complaints policy and procedure, however the contact details of the regulator are not included which makes it difficult for parents to report a complaint.

The partnership with parents and carers of children in receipt of early education is good. They are made aware of how the nursery operates in a detailed prospectus. They are informed of topics and operational changes verbally, in regular newsletters and on notice boards. In addition, parents and carers are invited to an open night and staff are developing a system for them to make an appointment to discuss their children's progress and development.

Organisation

The organisation is satisfactory.

Children in the nursery are provided with resources and furniture from high quality specialist nursery equipment suppliers. The management and staff team work hard to welcome children and families to the nursery and are dedicated to providing good, high quality care for the children.

The nursery has good recruitment methods to ensure staff are appropriately checked, vetted and qualified. The registered person has developed procedures to ensure there is an efficient system in place to ensure the continued suitability of staff to care for children.

The leadership and management of early education is good. The staff team regularly attend training on the Foundation Stage. They continue to enhance their knowledge of the stepping stones and the early learning goals with advice and guidance from the local authority. They are confident and have established their own methods of recording and evaluating children's progress. The registered person monitors staff practice and staff have regular team meetings to share and discuss teaching methods, further develop their expertise and understanding of planning and how children learn. Children in receipt of funding for early education are steadily achieving and progressing because the teaching methods are effective.

The staff team work well together and are continually striving to perfect appropriate policies, procedures and practice to keep children healthy and safeguard their welfare. There are clear systems in place for recording accidents and medication. Staff and children's attendance records clearly show the actual arrival and departure times and the rooms which staff work in.

Documentation is well maintained, up to date and regularly reviewed to reflect the progressive improvement of the operational practice. The staff team work well together to plan and provide children with exciting innovative experiences to enhance their development and progress. Overall, children's needs are met.

Improvements since the last inspection

At the last inspection, the quality of care was judged as inadequate. The nursery was required to ensure that children's 'Birth to three matters' development records are up to date and are used to plan for their next steps in learning; to improve access to information for parents in relation to their child's development records, diaries, daily discussion and policies and procedures; to ensure that adult to child ratios are maintained and that staff are deployed effectively throughout the day to support children and to ensure records of children's and staff attendance are accurately recorded at all times.

The managers of the nursery have fully developed the 'Birth to three matters' development records which clearly show children's progress and development and are shared with parents on a daily basis. The adult to child ratios are maintained at all times in each room including cover for absences and staff training. Registers of staff and children's attendance are up to date, accurate and show the actual times of arrival and departure. The improvement of the nursery is well underway and actions have been completed. This has ensured the quality of care is now of a satisfactory standard throughout the nursery.

At the last inspection the quality of nursery education was judged as inadequate. The nursery was required to ensure that planning is consistently maintained, is accessible and is differentiated for the different abilities of children; to ensure that children's nursery curriculum development records are up to date and are used to plan for their next steps in learning; to develop systems to monitor the effectiveness of the nursery education and to inform parents of the assessment procedure; to ensure initial assessments are completed with parents on entry to seek, value and act upon their views about their children's development, working with them to plan next steps in learning.

All staff working with children entitled to nursery education have attended training to increase their knowledge and understanding of the early learning goals and associated stepping stones. This included training on planning and assessment. Parents are fully informed on their children's progress and development and complete written homework books on their children's achievements at home. The homework books are used to plan individual next steps for learning. The detailed daily plans of activities are evaluated and used to monitor the effectiveness of the nursery education. These steps have ensured the quality of nursery education is now of a good standard.

Complaints since the last inspection

Since the last inspection there have been no complaints made to Ofsted that required the provider or Ofsted to take any action in order to meet the National Standards.

The provider is required to keep a record of complaints made by parents, which they can see on request. The complaints record may contain complaints other than those made to Ofsted.

THE QUALITY AND STANDARDS OF THE CARE AND NURSERY EDUCATION

On the basis of the evidence collected on this inspection:

The quality and standards of the care are satisfactory. The registered person meets the National Standards for under 8s day care and childminding.

The quality and standards of the nursery education are good.

WHAT MUST BE DONE TO SECURE FUTURE IMPROVEMENT?

The quality and standards of the care

To improve the quality and standards of care further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- ensure children in the baby room have access to drinks at all times and are regularly provided with outside play and fresh air
- ensure toys and equipment are presented in a safe and hygienic condition
- make sure the complaints policy and procedure contains the contact details of the regulator.

The quality and standards of the nursery education

To improve the quality and standards of nursery education further the registered person should take account of the following recommendation(s):

- further develop children's personal independence at mealtimes
- ensure all staff are engaged and communicate with the children.

Any complaints about the inspection or the report should be made following the procedures set out in the leaflet *Complaints about Ofsted Early Years: concerns or complaints about Ofsted's role in regulating and inspecting childcare and early education (HMI ref no 2599)* which is available from Ofsted's website: www.ofsted.gov.uk